

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 DODE-00 PA-01
USIA-06 SP-02 H-01 L-03 NSC-05 HA-05 /060 W
-----083098 180858Z /13
R 180035Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6568
INFO ALL OECD CAPITALS

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DEPARTMENT PASS LABOR

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, FR
SUBJECT: UNEMPLOYMENT: THE NUMBERS GAME CONTINUED

REF: PARIS 1434; PARIS 35372

1. SUMMARY: ON THE EVE OF THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS, REGISTERED UNEMPLOYMENT HAS DECLINED AGAIN FOR THE FIFTH SUCCESSIVE MONTH. THIS DEVELOPMENT IS BEING PORTRAYED BY THE GOVERNMENT AS A GREAT SUCCESS, AND BY ITS ENEMIES AS THE RESULT OF ADMINISTRATIVE MANIPULATION. END SUMMARY.

2. ON FEBRUARY 16, THE MINISTER OF LABOR OFFICIALLY RELEASED THE JANUARY UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES. FOR THE FIFTH SUCCESSIVE MONTH, THE SEASONALLY ADJUSTED NUMBERS OF UNEMPLOYED DECLINED. ON THE BASIS OF NEW SEASONAL ADJUSTMENT COEFFICIENTS, INTRODUCED IN 1978, THE NUMBER OF UNEMPLOYED AT THE END OF JANUARY WAS 1,021,000; AND ON THE BASIS OF THE OLD COEFFICIENTS USED IN 1977, THE NUMBER WAS 991,080. (IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THIS CONNECTION, IT WILL BE RECALLED THAT THE OLD SET OF COEFFICIENTS HAD PROVED UNSATISFACTORY; AND THAT THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SERVICE (INSEE) HAD PREPARED ITS NEW 1978 SERIES TO CORRECT THE DEFECTS (SEE REFTEL).

3. PREDICTABLY, THE GOVERNMENT AND ITS FRIENDS ARE

MAKING THE MOST OF THE DECLINE, EMPHASIZING THE UNDER ONE MILLION FIGURE PRODUCED BY THE OLD SYSTEM. EQUALLY PREDICTABLY, THE GOVERNMENT'S OPPONENTS HAVE BEEN TRYING TO DISCREDIT THE FIGURES, EVEN BEFORE THEY WERE RELEASED. THE ATTACK WAS BEGUN BY THE CGT AND CFDT, WHICH HAVE BEEN WAGING A STEADY CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT'S FIGURES ALL ALONG; AND WAS PICKED UP BY LE MONDE, WHICH RAN AN ARTICLE EARLIER THIS WEEK INTER ALIA ACCUSING LABOR MINISTER BEULLAC OF TRYING TO BLOCK THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW INSEE COEFFICIENTS SO THAT THE GOVERNMENT COULD OFFICIALLY REPORT LESS THAN ONE MILLION UNEMPLOYED IN THIS CRITICAL PRE-ELECTION PERIOD.

4. THE FOCUS OF THE ATTACKS ON THE GOVERNMENT FIGURES HAS BEEN THE ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES IN THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE'S (ANPE) METHOD OF REGISTERING NEW APPLICANTS, WHICH ALLEGEDLY IS ARTIFICIALLY REDUCING THE STATISTICS. THIS IS A REFERENCE TO AN INNOVATION, WHEREBY REGISTRATION FOR SOCIAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE IS BEING SEPARATED FROM INSCRIPTION ON THE UNEMPLOYMENT ROLLS. UNDER THE TRADITIONAL ANPE SYSTEM, A JOB SEEKER IS ROUTINELY REGISTERED IMMEDIATELY BOTH FOR SOCIAL AID AND EMPLOYMENT PLACING. UNDER THE NEW SYSTEM, AN APPLICANT IS IMMEDIATELY REGISTERED FOR SOCIAL ASSISTANCE, BUT IS NOT GIVEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HIS FIRST EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEW, AND SO NOT COUNTED IN THE ANPE CASELOAD FIGURES, FOR TWO WEEKS. THE STATED PURPOSE OF THIS CHANGE IS TO SEGREGATE OUT OF THE ANPE'S WORKLOAD AND STATISTICS THOSE INDIVIDUALS (ESTIMATED AS UP TO 10 PERCENT OF ALL APPLICANTS) WHO FIND NEW JOBS ON THEIR OWN SOON AFTER BECOMING UNEMPLOYED; AND WHO REGISTER WITH THE AGENCY SIMPLY TO OBTAIN SHORT TERM SOCIAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE.

5. AS FOR THE ALLEGATIONS THAT THIS NEW SYSTEM, AND VARIOUS OTHER SMALLER MODIFICATIONS IN THE ANPE PROCEDURES ARE HIDING UNEMPLOYMENT, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE SYSTEM HAS NOT YET BEEN PUT INTO GENERAL USE (E.G. SUCH CENTERS AS PARIS, NANTES, ROUEN, AND LILLE REMAIN ON THE OLD SYSTEM), AND IT IS MOST UNLIKELY THAT THE PILOT PROGRAMS CURRENTLY IN EFFECT HAVE HAD ANY APPRECIABLE IMPACT ON THE STATISTICS. HOWEVER, THE WATERS HAVE BEEN MUDDIED SO OFTEN AND SO WELL THAT THE CREDABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT'S FIGURES HAS BEEN AFFECTED.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: UNEMPLOYMENT, DATA, REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978PARIS05435
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780075-0849
Format: TEL
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780237/aaaabflb.tel
Line Count: 115
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: aeab07d4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 PARIS 1434, 78 PARIS 35372
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3549013
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UNEMPLOYMENT: THE NUMBERS GAME CONTINUED
TAGS: ELAB, FR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/aeab07d4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014